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ABSTRACT

This final report is an evaluation of Project Inspire, a program designed to create within the school setting a positive framework and atmosphere for learning through efforts directed toward students and teachers. Conducted at the Francis Junior High School in North-West Washington, D.C., Project Inspire aimed to improve academic achievement, attendance, and attitudes by means of a multi-faceted program emphasizing scheduled group sessions, improved communications, and attention to emerging adolescent needs. Included is: (1) a description of the project; (2) methods and procedures used (including instrumentation, sampling schedule of activities and data collection and analysis); (3) results and analysis of data; and (4) conclusions and recommendations. Findings are presented in terms of program objectives: increased positive feelings toward school, increased academic achievement, reduction of tardiness, absenteeism, dropout rate and critical classroom incidents, decreased use of suspensions, and decrease in punitive detentions. (Author MS)

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EVALUATION OF PROJECT INSPIRE

TITLE III EVALUATION PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

Division of Research and Evaluation
Public Schools of the District
of Columbia, Washington, D.C.

Contract No.1097-AA-NS-0-5-GA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
CHAPTER I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT	1
Purpose and Objectives	2
Evaluation Objectives	3
CHAPTER II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	4
Instrumentation	4
Student Questionnaire	4
Teacher Questionnaire	4
Youth Inventory	5
Standardized Achievement Tests	5
Interviews and Observations	5
Sampling	6
Schedule of Activities	7
Data Collection and Analysis	7
CHAPTER III. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	8
Objective 1. Increased Positive Feelings Toward School	8
Objective 2. Increased Academic Achievement	13
Objective 3. Reduction of Tardiness	14
Objective 4. Reduction of the Absenteeism Rate	15
Objective 5. Reduction of the Dropout Rate	16
Objective 6. Reduction of Critical Classroom Incidents	17
Objective 7. Decreased Use of Suspensions	18

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Contd..)

CHAPTER	Page No.
CHAPTER III. (Contd..)	
Objective 8. Decrease in Punitive Detentions	19
Student Opinions	20
Project's Benefits as Viewed by the Students	20
Distinct Features of the Project	24
Significance of Different Topics Discussed in the Class	26
Teacher Opinions	28
Summary of Findings	32
CHAPTER IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	36

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page No.
1.	Number of Students Who Participated in the Questionnaire Survey by Grade and Section	6
2.	Students Having Serious School Problems	8
3.	School Problems of the Youth Inventory Decreasing in Seriousness from Pre-Inventory to Post-Inventory	10
4.	Summary of Results of School Problems of the Youth Inventory	12
5.	Average Grade Equivalent Scores on the Battery Composite of the Educational Development Series	13
6.	Tardiness Rates for 1974-75	14
7.	Absenteeism Rate by Grade	15
8.	Trends in Dropout Rates	17
9.	Trends in Critical Classroom Incidents	18
10.	Use of Suspensions	18
11.	Use of Punitive Detentions	19
12.	Project's Benefits as Viewed by the Students	21
13.	Features of the Project Rated by Students	25
14.	Student Ratings of Topics Discussed in Class	27
15.	Teacher Opinions of Project Inspire	29

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Project Inspire is directed toward the creation within the school setting of a positive framework and atmosphere for learning through efforts directed toward students and teachers. Conducted at the Francis Junior High School in North-West Washington, D.C., Project Inspire aimed to improve academic achievement, attendance, and attitudes by means of a multi-faceted program emphasizing scheduled group sessions, improved communictaions, and attention to emerging adolescent needs.

According to the original proposal enabling the implementation of Project Inspire, the project was to facilitate:

1. improvement of classroom climate;
2. elimination of tardiness and illegal absenteeism;
3. elimination of student suspension;
4. improvement of student achievement;
5. improvement of teacher and administrative job satisfaction;
6. testing of "new role" delineations for teacher-counselors;
7. provisions enabling college students to receive experience working with junior high school students identified as victims of child abuse and neglect; and
8. implementation of a comprehensive program to train teachers to recognize and understand child abuse and neglect related problems.

The project began in September, 1973 with the involvement of all Francis Junior High School students and teachers. The primary thrust of the program was to attain the total involvement of the organized student body of Francis Junior High School in establishing positive mental health and increased social competence on the part of its students as they actively sought responsibility for their own educational progress.

According to the project director, a major component of the project's operation was the creation of a "Group Counseling" program at the school. Each student at the school spent

one class period a week with not more than fifteen students and a teacher counselor in a group counseling session. These sessions were intended to help each student to understand himself and to develop increased commitment to a set of values while affording the student opportunity to examine many conflicting sets of values and viewpoints held by members of a common society. The group counseling sessions gave students the opportunity to discuss ethical, social, personal and curricular problems and experiences. The teacher-counselors explored the implications of experiences, ideas or values advanced by group members.

Purpose and Objectives

The major purpose of the project was the total involvement of the organized student body of Francis Junior High School in the development of positive mental health structures and increased social competence on the part of the students as they actively sought responsibility for their own educational progress. The specific objectives were:

1. To create increased positive feelings toward school.
2. To obtain increased academic achievement.
3. To reduce the tardiness rate.
4. To reduce the absenteeism rate.
5. To reduce the drop-out rate.
6. To reduce critical classroom incidents.
7. To reduce the use of suspensions.
8. To reduce the use of punitive detentions.

Other behavioral objectives and/or specific competencies stated by the project staff for 1974-75 were:

1. To increase student satisfaction with teacher class assignments.
2. To increase student satisfaction with the teacher.
3. To increase teacher sensitivity to human relations situations in the classroom.
4. To improve the overall teaching environment.

The project staff attempted to achieve these objectives by:

(a) Strengthening a Student Government Association consisting of a group of school-wide officers, a general representative assembly and at least three Service Committees or Councils. The Service Committees were mainly responsible for (1) the improvement of student achievement; (2) the cooperative structuring of disciplinary decisions; and (3) the improvement of attendance;

(b) Organizing each home room in the school into one or more analysis groups, directed and supervised by teacher-courselors;

(c) Implementing under the supervision of the project director a crisis intervention center to which student problems could be referred as they arose, and to provide a facility in which staff of Project Inspire or teachers could contact parents and confer with all interested parties.

Evaluation Objectives

Having examined the project objectives and the specific competencies established by the project staff, the evaluators set the following evaluation objectives:

1. To determine the feasibility of the on-going project activities as outlined in the proposal.

2. To assess the adequacy of the supplies, materials and services provided through the program.

3. To examine the effectiveness of the project staff in coordinating the overall activities of the program.

4. To evaluate the extent of community involvement in the program and to determine to what extent it helped to make the program more meaningful to students.

5. To determine to what extent the project succeeded in developing positive attitudes toward school, and reducing absenteeism and critical classroom incidents among students.

6. To make recommendations for continued operation based on findings regarding the scope of the project.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The evaluators based their design on the different activities of the Analysis Groups, the primary units of the project. The attitudinal survey design implemented for the evaluation attempted, through different evaluation instruments developed strictly for the assessment of Project Inspire, to reach all segments of the Analysis Groups, including students, teacher-counselors, and the administrative staff of the project. Additionally, a questionnaire addressed to teachers assessed their perspectives on the project.

Since this was an ongoing project, a number of other instruments already in use were analyzed to determine the extent to which the project was achieving its objectives.

Instrumentation

All the necessary data for the evaluation was collected through the use of five different evaluation instruments: two questionnaires (students and teachers), a youth inventory, a standardized achievement battery, and informal interviews with and observations of selected staff and students. Non-structured group conferences with staff and students were also used as a means for collecting additional data regarding the overall functioning of the project. Secondary data provided by the Project Director included counts of absences, critical classroom incidents, drop-outs, suspensions, and punitive detentions.

Student Questionnaire:

The questionnaire designed for the students had three distinct sections. The first section dealt with the benefits of Project Inspire; the second section dealt with distinct features of the project, and the third section elicited student ratings of different topics discussed in the Group Analysis sessions. This section also allowed for students to express their personal opinions about the project.

Teacher Questionnaire:

The "Teacher Opinionnaire" was aimed at compiling the opinions of teachers at Francis Junior High School regarding the different aspects of Project Inspire. This instrument contained 10 items with space for comments about the strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Youth Inventory:

The school was using a Youth Inventory developed by the Scholastic Testing Service (STS) of Bensenville, Illinois to measure the students' attitudes toward school. The evaluators made use of the pre- and post inventory scores to measure changes in student attitudes during the year. Although the inventory contained an exhaustive list of items, only the section pertinent to Project Inspire was used.

Standardized Achievement Tests:

The Educational Development Series Test Battery published by the Scholastic Testing Service was used by the school. Data provided by the project director for May-June 1975 was used by the evaluators as the post-test for comparison with the May-June 1974 results. The parts of the total battery used by the school (to economize on testing time) include Individual Abilities (Non-verbal and Verbal), Language Studies (Reading and English), and Technical Studies (Mathematics only).

Interviews and Observations:

The interviews with the staff and students were quite informal. They were asked about the nature of the project activities, student involvement in planning the daily/weekly functions, significant features of Project Inspire as they experienced them, drawbacks or weaknesses, and the feasibility of such a project to create a positive attitude toward the school, teachers and themselves. The interviews were also used to develop the questionnaires and amplify the data.

In addition to these instruments, the evaluators conducted informal observations of group sessions and the daily functioning of the project. The evaluators also held several group conferences with the project staff to obtain their reactions to the project activities.

Three of the Group Counseling Sessions conducted by each of the three teacher-counselors were observed by the evaluators on different occasions during the evaluation. Attempts were made to observe the same group of students more than once. However, it was only possible to observe one group twice, because of scheduling problems.

Informal student interviews were conducted after each of the observation sessions regarding the topic(s) discussed and their opinions about Project Inspire and the direction it should take.

Sampling

For the Student Questionnaire, fifty percent of all students at Francis Junior High School were selected, using a stratified random sampling technique. All sections of grades 7, 8 and 9 were listed by their classroom numbers. Alternate sections from each grade were selected by using the random sampling method. Since there were 23 sections in all, twelve sections were selected with a total of 342 students, slightly more than the 50% originally planned. However, when the questionnaires were administered, only 244 (71.4%) students actually completed them. Heavy absenteeism due to the varied year end functions at the school (e.g. field-trips) can be cited as the reason for not obtaining a higher return on the questionnaire.

Twenty-one of the 26 teachers completed the teachers questionnaire. Their responses are reported in the "findings" section of this report.

Table 1

NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY BY GRADE AND SECTION

Grade	Section	Number of Students	Grade Total
7	109	18	
7	202	18	
7	209	28	
7	308	29	
			93
8	114	22	
8	203	16	
8	304	22	
8	312	23	
			83
9	103	10	
9	110	16	
9	208	15	
9	302	27	
			68
Total	12		244

Schedule of Activities

Due to the late start of the evaluation, the evaluators were not able to observe the early activities of the project. Therefore, much of the planning and development of the project were studied from the documentary information furnished by the project director. The evaluators made every possible effort to collect the data in an unbiased manner from the official records provided.

Most of the field data was collected in May, with the remainder collected a few days before the close of school in June 1975.

Data Collection and Analysis

All the student questionnaires were administered by the teacher counselors on one day at the selected sections of each grade. The classroom teachers assisted the teacher counselors in the distribution and collection of questionnaires. The teachers were given the teacher questionnaire by the project director. The project director collected all the questionnaires and submitted them to the evaluators during the last week of May 1975. Necessary precautions were taken to assure the confidentiality of the data.

All the interviews and observations were conducted by the evaluators in a manner that would assure the reliability and confidentiality of the data. Frequencies and percentages, means and standard deviations were the primary analysis techniques used. The "t" test and z test were used to test for the statistical significance of differences.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

The findings of the analysis are presented in this Chapter, first in relation to the objectives of the project, and second in terms of the attitudes and reactions of students and teachers.

Objective 1. Increased Positive Feelings Toward School

This objective was measured by the School Problems section of the Youth Inventory published by the Scholastic Testing Service.

Students mark each item as follows: "...one of your most serious problems...."; "...a moderate problem for you..."; "... a small occasional problem..."; or "... does not express, the way you feel..."

Table 2 shows the results of the Pre and Post Inventories for each grade and school-wide, indicating the percentage of students marking each item as a "most serious problem.." vs. all other choices.

Table 2

STUDENTS HAVING SERIOUS SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Grade	Number of Students	Percent Averages of Students Having Serious School Problems	
		Pre Inventory (Dec. 1974)	Post Inventory (May 1975)
Seventh	195	21 %	19 %
Eighth	180	20 %	15 %
Ninth	169	15 %	14 %
School-wide	544	19%	16%

Using the "z" test ($z = 1.84$), the difference of 3% in serious problems between the pre and post inventory, although in the direction hypothesized, was not significant at the 5% level of confidence.

A further analysis was carried out in order to determine those specific items in which improvement was achieved in increasing positive feelings toward school. A detailed analysis was carried out for each of the 38 School Problem items in the Youth Inventory.

Table 3 (next page) lists the items in the STS Youth Inventory that showed a statistically significant decrease in the percentage of students indicating that the item was a serious or moderate problem for them. Of the 38 items in the area of school problems, 14 items (37%) showed a statistically significant decrease at the 1% level of confidence from the pre-inventory to the post-inventory administered in 1974-75. The remaining 24 items showed no change from the pre to the post inventory.

Table 4 (page 12) provides a summary of the key points of the data in Table 3. The percentage of students who marked each item as a serious or moderate problem on the pre-test and the rank, from high to low, shows the level of need or concern held by the entire student body. The items that ranked highest as the most widespread problems included many indicating concern over academic work, including "15. I have trouble writing good essays; 1. I want to learn how to read better; 2. I wish I knew how to study better; 7. I wish I could be more calm when I recite in class". One question of concern to many students, number 21, reflects the feeling that teachers play favorites. Ranking 6th is a question reflecting a concern for obtaining advice in choosing courses. The last two columns show the percentage of decrease (pre-inventory vs. post-inventory) in the students marking the item as a serious and/or moderate concern and the rank order, from high to low, of the percentage of decrease. The largest decrease by far was obtained for question 15 with 15.6%, while all other items decreased by 4.2% (item 24) to 7.9% (item 20). It should be noted that all differences in this table are statistically significant at the 1% level of confidence.

Based on this analysis, it is concluded that the first objective was successfully achieved.

Table 3

SCHOOL PROBLEMS OF THE YOUTH INVENTORY DECREASING IN SERIOUSNESS FROM PRE-INVENTORY TO POST-INVENTORY

Response Categories
S - Serious Problem; M - Moderate;
0 - All others - small problems, not a problem or blank.

Item	R.C.	Pre Inventory		Post Inventory	
		f	%	f	%
1. I want to learn how to read better	S*	126	23.2	90	16.5
	M*	126	23.2	120	22.1
	0	292	53.6	334	61.4
2. I wish I knew how to study better	S*	130	23.9	95	17.5
	M*	162	27.8	146	26.8
	0	252	48.3	303	55.7
7. I wish I could be more calm when I recite in class.	S*	112	20.6	72	13.2
	M*	133	24.4	129	23.7
	0	299	55.0	343	63.1
12. I don't see much point in my courses.	S*	47	8.6	43	7.9
	M*	72	13.2	46	8.5
	0	425	78.2	455	83.6
15. I have trouble writing good essays.	S*	127	23.3	89	16.4
	M*	163	30.0	116	21.3
	0	254	46.7	339	62.3
18. I wish my teachers would make the assignments more clear.	S*	141	25.9	104	19.1
	M	91	16.7	104	19.1
	0	312	57.4	336	61.8
20. My teachers don't take much interest in me.	S	46	8.5	52	9.6
	M*	110	20.2	67	12.3
	0	338	71.3	425	78.1
21. It would be better if the teachers didn't play favorites.	S*	155	28.5	125	23.0
	M*	83	15.3	74	13.6
	0	306	56.2	345	63.4
22. Our class periods are not well organized.	S*	79	14.5	55	10.1
	M*	89	16.4	82	15.1
	0	376	69.1	407	74.8

N = 544

* Differences in percentages statistically significant at the 1% level of confidence or beyond as measured by the z test. Categories marked were used to compare percentages.

Table 3 (Contd..)

Item	R.C.	Pre Inventory		Post Inventory	
		f	%	f	%
24. I have trouble with mathematics courses	S*	144	26.5	116	21.3
	M	98	18.2	114	21.0
	O	302	55.3	314	57.7
27. I have trouble with English courses.	S*	62	11.4	35	6.4
	M	63	11.6	80	14.7
	O	419	77.0	429	78.9
32. Am I doing as well as I should in my school work?	S*	108	19.9	77	14.2
	M	137	25.2	150	27.6
	O	299	54.9	317	58.2
33. People nag at me about my school work.	S*	95	17.5	68	12.5
	M	59	10.8	67	12.3
	O	390	71.7	409	75.2
38. I need advice in choosing courses.	S*	74	13.7	60	16.0
	M*	124	22.8	110	20.2
	O	346	63.5	374	68.8

N = 544

* Differences in percentages statistically significant at the 1% level of confidence or beyond as measured by the z test. Categories marked were used to compare percentages.

Table 4

SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF SCHOOL PROBLEMS OF THE YOUTH INVENTORY*

Item	Pre Inventory		Decrease	
	%	Rank	%	Rank
1. I want to learn how to read better.	46.1[1]	3	7.8	3
2. I wish I knew how to study better.	51.7[1]	2	7.4	4
7. I wish I could be more calm when I recite in class.	45.0[1]	4	7.1	6
12. I don't see much point in my courses.	21.8[1]	10	5.4	10
15. I have trouble writing good essays.	53.3[1]	1	15.6	1
18. I wish my teachers would make the assignments more clear.	25.9[2]	9	6.8	7
20. My teachers don't take much interest in me.	20.2[3]	11	7.9	2
21. It would be better if the teachers did't play favorites.	43.8[1]	5	7.2	5
22. Our class periods are not well organized.	30.9[1]	7	5.8	8
24. I have trouble with 8 mathematics courses.	26.5[2]	8	4.2	14
27. I have trouble with English courses.	11.4[2]	14	5.0	12.5
32. Am I doing as well as I should do in my school work?	19.9[2]	12	5.7	9
33. People nag at me about my school work.	17.5[2]	13	5.0	12.5
38. I need advice in choosing courses.	36.5[1]	6	5.3	11

* Data summarized from Table 3.

1. Percentage of students marking item as a serious or moderate problem.
2. Percentage of students marking item only as a serious problem.
3. Percentage of students marking item as only a moderate problem.

Objective 2. Increased Academic Achievement

The average of the Battery Composite results of all students in the school who took both the pre and post Educational Development Series Test Battery is reported. The data for June 1974 is used for the pre-test. The Battery Composite is considered by the Scholastic Testing Service as the most reliable score in the entire program. The Battery Composite is the average of Individual Abilities (Non-verbal and verbal), Language Studies (Reading and English), Technical Studies (Mathematics).

Table 5 shows the average grade equivalent Battery Composite scores for June 1974, used as the pre-test, June 1975, used as the post-test and the gains for grades 8 and 9. The results show a 1.3 year gain for the eighth and ninth grade students. (Scholastic Testing Services, Educational Development Series Advanced, Partial Battery.)

Table 5

AVERAGE GRADE EQUIVALENT SCORES ON THE BATTERY COMPOSITE OF THE EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES

Grade	1974 Average	1975 Average	Gain
Eighth	6.5	7.7	+ 1.2
Ninth	7.3	8.6	+ 1.3
Eighth and Ninth	6.9	8.2	+ 1.3

Analysis of the achievement gains since December 1973 (pre testing for 1973-74) shows an overall gain of 21 months for students who were 7th graders last year and 20 months for those who were 8th graders last year. These gains are over an 18 month period. When one considers that these students were about 16 months behind grade level at the start of Project Inspire and could have slipped further behind over this full year period, the gains achieved are indeed quite remarkable and lend full support to the effectiveness of Project Inspire.

The results for both years far exceed the objectives for academic achievement established for the project. Furthermore, the results in this area are more favorable, from the evaluators' experience, than the results of many other innovative projects targeted for inner city children.

Objective 3. Reduction of Tardiness

Tardiness rates for the current year were obtained for the beginning and end of the school year. Table 6 shows that tardiness rates were reduced from 3.5% to 1.3%, a difference which was significant beyond the 1% level of confidence.

Table 6

TARDINESS RATES FOR 1974 - 75

Period	Number of Tardinesses for Students	No. of Days in the Period	Average Daily Tardiness	Enrollment on Roster	Average Daily Tardiness Rate
September through Mid-October	760	32	24	681	3.5%
May through Mid-June	294	32	9	681	1.3%

Difference in percentages significant beyond the 1% level of confidence, $z = 3.12$.

Actually, both tardiness rates are quite low. To determine whether there was a trend in the reduction of tardiness, data from 1973-74 was also examined.

The results for the two year period show a reduction in the average daily tardiness rate from 8% in 1973-74 to this year's level of 1.3% in the May-June period, a very dramatic reduction. The efforts of Project Inspire appear to have made a great deal of difference in getting students to school. Considering the very low rate of tardiness achieved (1.3%) further reductions in

tardiness are not likely. In the future Project Inspire should strive to maintain this low tardiness rate.

Objective 4. Reduction of the Absenteeism Rate

Table 7 shows the absenteeism rates for each grade and school wide for the beginning and end of the school year. There was a 1% increase in absenteeism school-wide for the May-June period. (The difference is not statistically significant). This objective was therefore not achieved. Ninth graders in both periods had a lower absenteeism rate (14%) than 7th or 8th graders (about 17% to 20%).

Table 7

ABSENTEEISM RATE BY GRADE

Period	Grade			School - Wide
	7	8	9	
September through Mid-October	17.6	18.3	14.4	16.9
May through Mid-June	18.9	19.9	14.2	17.9

A trend analysis was also undertaken to see if there was any reduction in the absentee rate over the past several years. Data obtained from the Statistical Unit, Division of Research and Evaluation, D.C. Public Schools gives the following figures:

Jan 5 - May 25, 1973 - 16.9%
Oct. '73 - May 1974 - 19.0%

This data does not indicate a trend toward reduced absenteeism. The rate for the current year, 17.4% is slightly higher than the six month period preceeding the project.

Citywide data for Junior High Schools reported by the Statistical Unit, Division of Research and Evaluation, D.C. Public Schools shows that Francis Junior High School is quite typical of other junior high schools in the city. Citywide junior high school absenteeism rates were 20.3% for 1972-73 and 18.7% for 1973-74. The problem of absenteeism is system-wide and needs to be given greater attention. Further worthwhile examination should attempt to make a distinction between absence and truancy.

Project Inspire will need to give further attention to problems of absenteeism. Further analysis of this problem would be worthwhile for program planning and evaluation. For this purpose, it is useful to examine some of the possible reasons for absences.

1. Student Illness: Legitimate ill health is the primary excusable reason for absence from school. Strictly speaking, these absences should not be counted in the evaluation as they are beyond the control of the student and Project Inspire.

2. Family Problem: With the economically disadvantaged, illness of siblings or parents and the need to care for younger siblings sometimes arises. Family assistance may be required to enable the child to attend school.

3. Motivation: Lack of interest in school or conflicting interests may keep a child out of school. Family and school encouragement to attend school regularly is particularly important. Project Inspire staff need to consider ways of improving motivation to attend school when serious illness is not the problem.

Two further analyses would be helpful:

1. Reasons for non-attendance. Those listed above plus others.

2. Individual differences in attendance. Following up on students with high absence rates.

With these analyses, Project Inspire should plan a follow-up program on absent students to ascertain what assistance or encouragement can be provided.

Objective 5. Reduction of the Dropout Rate

Elementary and Secondary level students who withdraw from school before the completion of the school year and

to the system's knowledge do not continue in a school situation are considered to be dropouts.[1]

Table 8 shows the dropout rates for a three year period starting with 1972-73, the school year preceeding the beginning of Project Inspire. The results show a substantial and statistically significant reduction in the dropout rate to a current low of 10 students or 1.5% of enrollment. This reduction has been achieved in the face of increasing enrollments at Francis Junior High School.

Table 8

TRENDS IN DROPOUT RATES

School Year	Francis' Enrollment	Francis' Dropouts	Francis' Dropout Rate
1972-73	603	44	7.3%
1973-74	651	28	4.3%
1974-75	681	10	1.5%

Objective 6. Reduction of Critical Classroom Incidents

Critical classroom incidents concern student behavioral problems such as fighting or disrespect to the teacher reported by teachers. Table 9 shows data for the two years in which Project Inspire has been in operation.

Compared with last year, critical classroom incidents are down dramatically from an average 4.1 per day in the first advisory and 1.6 per day in the second advisory to one or less per day this year in each advisory.

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[1]Sizemore, Barbara A., The Superintendent's 120 Day Report, District of Columbia Public Schools, March 1974, pp. 4-5.

Table 9

TRENDS IN CRITICAL CLASSROOM INCIDENTS

Year and Period	Number of Incidents	Days	Daily Rate
1973-74: Advisory I	184	45	4.1
Advisory II	74	47	1.6
1974-75: Sept.-Mid.Oct.	23	24	1.0
May-Mid June	14	23	0.6

These results reflect favorably on the attitudes and behavior of students and teachers alike in managing their relationships without precipitating confrontations.

Considering the low rate of Critical Classroom Incidents reported this year, it is doubted that further improvements can be made in subsequent years.

Objective 7. Decreased Use of Suspensions

Table 10 shows the decrease in average daily suspensions from 5.1 to 3.4. Students are suspended typically for one or two days, for a serious offense such as fighting, not attending class, or failure to attend detention sessions. Although the trend is in the direction hypothesized, the difference of 1.7% was not statistically significant at the 5% level of confidence. It should be noted, however, that a larger sampling of suspensions might have achieved statistical significance.

Table 10

USE OF SUSPENSIONS

Period	Number of Suspensions	Number of Days	Average Daily Suspensions
September through Mid-October	123	24	5.1
May through Mid-June	79	23	3.4

Objective 8. Decrease in Punitive Detentions

Punitive detentions are administered primarily for tardiness to school or to class. Table 11 shows that there was a 59% decrease (31/53 = 59%) in punitive detentions from the first to the last period in the year. The difference was significant beyond the 1% level of confidence.

Table 11

USE OF PUNITIVE DETENTIONS

Period	No. of Punitive Detentions	Number of days	Average daily Punitive Detentions	Average percent of student enrollment*
September through Mid-October	1274	24	53	7.8
May through Mid-June	508	23	22	3.2

* Difference significant at the 1% level of confidence, $z = 5.8$.

Student Opinions

A questionnaire was administered to students from four sections each of grades seven though nine. The students were randomly selected to obtain a sample of 50% of the students at Francis Junior High School representing all three grade levels. Of the 342 students selected, 244 (75%) completed the questionnaire. The failure to obtain considerably less than 100% completion of questionnaires can be attributed to school year-end activities. The findings reported here are based on those questionnaires returned by 75% of the students.

The 26 specific questionnaire items fall into three distinct categories: project benefits to students, distinct features of the project, and the significance of different topics discussed in the project.

Project's Benefits as Viewed by the Students:

As Table 12 shows, the majority of students surveyed felt that Project Inspire was highly beneficial to them in many ways. For example, 63 (67.7%) seventh graders, 54 (65.1%) eighth graders, and 44 (64.7%) ninth graders thought that it was one class where they could freely express their opinions about anything that they wanted to talk about. Only 4.3% seventh graders, 4.81% eighth graders, and 7.4% ninth graders, disagreed with that feeling. Among all students responding, 161 (71.8%) shared the feeling that the project gave them maximum freedom of expression, and only 13 (5.8%) students did not agree.

An equally higher number of students, 61 (65.6%) seventh graders, 66 (79.5%) eighth graders and 43 (63.2%) ninth graders thought that they had enough freedom in Project Inspire to express their true feelings about their school. Again, only a relatively small number (7.5% seventh graders, 1.8% eighth graders, and 11.8% ninth graders) felt their freedom was limited in that area.

When all the three grades are combined, about 170 (75.9%) thought that the project gave them the opportunity to express their true feelings about school; only 50 (22.3%) students were "not sure", and 24 students "disagreed".

About 46 (50%) of 7th graders, 36 (43.4%) of 8th graders and 26 (38.2%) of 9th graders felt that Project Inspire helped them to solve school problems of one kind or another. Of the total group responding, however, 108 (48.2%) agreed that the project helped them to solve school problems, while 92 (41.1%) were "not sure", and 43 (17.6%) disagreed. The trend appears to be quite positive in that regard.

Table 12

PROJECT'S BENEFITS AS VIEWED BY THE STUDENTS

Items		Frequencies and Percentages by Grade							
		7th		8th		9th		All Students	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Project Inspire has given me a chance to:									
1. Say what is on mind	Agree	63	67.7	54	65.1	44	64.7	161	71.8
	Not sure	25	26.9	25	30.1	19	27.9	69	30.8
	Disagree	4	4.3	4	4.8	5	7.4	13	5.8
2. Express my feelings about school	Agree	61	65.6	66	79.5	43	63.2	170	75.9
	Not sure	25	26.9	8	9.6	17	25.0	50	22.3
	Disagree	7	7.5	9	10.8	8	11.8	24	10.7
3. Help solve school problems	Agree	46	49.5	36	43.4	26	38.2	108	48.2
	Not sure	34	36.6	36	43.4	22	32.4	92	41.1
	Disagree	12	12.9	11	13.3	20	29.4	43	17.6
Project Inspire has helped me:									
4. Get along better with my teachers	Agree	35	37.6	33	39.8	19	27.9	87	35.7
	Not sure	33	35.5	30	36.1	27	39.7	90	36.9
	Disagree	25	26.9	19	22.9	22	32.4	66	27.1
5. Get along better with my parents	Agree	42	45.2	38	45.8	30	44.1	102	41.9
	Not sure	21	22.6	20	24.1	11	16.2	52	21.3
	Disagree	28	30.1	25	30.1	27	39.7	80	30.2
6. Get along better with my classmates	Agree	32	34.4	40	48.2	26	38.2	98	40.1
	Not sure	39	41.9	33	39.8	21	30.9	93	38.5
	Disagree	22	23.7	9	10.8	21	30.9	52	21.3
	N =	93		83		68		244	

Percentages for each item may not total 100% because some students skipped certaim items from the questionnaire.

Table 12 (Contd...)

Items		Frequencies and Percentages by Grade							
		7th		8th		9th		All Students	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
7. Understand myself better	Agree	53	57.0	51	61.4	34	50.0	138	55.8
	Not sure	29	31.2	26	31.3	19	27.9	74	30.3
	Disagree	11	11.8	6	7.2	12	17.6	29	11.9
8. Get better grades	Agree	39	41.9	38	45.8	25	36.8	102	41.8
	Not sure	37	39.8	25	30.1	27	39.7	59	36.5
	Disagree	16	17.2	20	24.1	16	23.5	52	21.3
9. Learn better how to study	Agree	31	33.3	33	39.8	26	38.2	90	36.9
	Not sure	40	43.0	34	41.0	18	26.5	92	37.7
	Disagree	20	21.5	16	19.3	24	35.3	60	24.6
10. Understand more what my teachers expect of me	Agree	35	37.6	46	55.4	28	41.2	109	44.7
	Not sure	42	45.2	25	30.1	23	33.8	90	38.9
	Disagree	13	14.0	11	13.3	17	25.0	41	16.8
11. Be more interested in school	Agree	45	48.4	47	56.6	32	47.1	124	50.8
	Not sure	36	38.7	24	28.9	21	30.9	81	33.2
	Disagree	11	11.8	11	13.3	15	22.1	37	15.2
12. Be more confident of my school work	Agree	50	53.8	54	65.1	36	52.9	140	57.4
	Not sure	30	32.3	19	22.9	14	20.6	63	25.8
	Disagree	11	11.8	10	12.0	18	26.5	39	16.0
	N =	93		83		68		244	

Percentages for each item may not total 100% because some students skipped certain items from the questionnaire.

Nevertheless, only 35 (37.6%) of 7th graders, 33 (39.8%) of 8th graders, and 19 (27.9%) of 9th graders agreed that the Project helped them to get along better with their teachers. The remaining 58 (62.4%) 7th graders, 50 (60.3%) 8th graders, and 49 (72.1%) 9th graders were either "not sure" or totally "disagreed". Of the total number of respondents, 87 (35.7%) agreed, 90 (36.9%) were not sure, and 66 (27.1%) disagreed with the statement.

Many students felt that the project helped them to get along better with their parents. About 42 (45.2%) 7th graders, 38 (45.8%) eighth graders, and 30 (44.1%) 9th graders, a total of 102 (41.9%) students, agreed that the project helped them to get along better with their parents. However, 52 (21.3%) students from all grades were "not sure", while 80 (30.2%) disagreed.

Only 98 (40.1%) of the 244 students responding felt that the project helped them get along better with classmates. Ninety-three (38.5%) students were "not sure", while 52 (21.3%) "disagreed". From the three statements in which students were asked about the extent to which the project helped them to get along better with their teachers, parents, and classmates, the latter had the lowest positive response.

A large number of students, 138 (55.8%), agreed that Project Inspire enabled them to understand themselves better. Seventy-four (30.3%) students were "not sure", and 29 (11.9%) disagreed.

One hundred and two (41.8%) students from all grades agreed that the project helped them to get a better grade in different subjects. Eighty-nine (36.5%) students were "not sure" and 52 (21.3%) disagreed.

Only 90 (36.9%) students agreed that the Project had some impact on their study habits. Ninty-two (37.7%) students were "not sure" and 60 (24.6%) disagreed with the statement.

The student responses were more positive when asked about the project's contribution to their understanding of teacher expectations. One hundred and nine (44.7%) agreed that the project did help them to understand teachers' expectations while 90 (38.9%) were "not sure" and 41 (16.8%) disagreed.

One hundred and twentyfour (50.8%) students agreed that the project increased their interest in school. However, 81 (33.2%) students were "not sure" that the project increased their interest in school, while 37 (15.2%) students disagreed. Project inspire activities seem to have elicited a burgeoning interest in school among students and in turn to have created a positive image for the school.

A majority of students felt more confident about their school work than they did before Project Inspire. One hundred and forty (57.4%) students agreed that the Project had helped them to build confidence in their school work. Only 63 (25.8%) students were "not sure" and 39 (16.0%) students disagreed that the project had increased their confidence in school work.

Distinct Features of the Project:

Only 89 (36.5%) of those students surveyed rated the small Group Sessions "excellent". A good majority of students, 137 (56.1%) rated them "average" and a small number, 13 (5.3%), felt that the small Group Sessions were "poor".

Opinions about the field trip activities were mixed. Ninety-seven (39.8%) students rated them "excellent", 84 (34.4%) "average" and 57 (23.4%) "poor".

Films were one of the more highly rated items on the scale. One hundred and nineteen (48.7%) students rated them "excellent", although 100 (41.0%) rated them only "average". It is significant, however, that only 23 (9.4%) students gave the films a "poor" rating.

The pictures and slides used in the project classes received a poorer rating than the films. While 96 (39.3%) students rated them "excellent", 116 (47.5%) thought that they were "average", and 32 (13.1%) gave them a "poor" rating.

The students had mixed feelings regarding the discussions and interactions held in Project Inspire. Only 88 (36.1%) students felt that they were "excellent". At the same time, 133 (54.5%) rated them "average" and 19 (7.8%) "poor".

One hundred and thirty (53.3%) of the students rated the performance of the teacher counselors as "excellent". Only 92 (37.7%) students thought that the performance of the teacher councelors as "average", while 15 (6.1%) rated them as "poor". A majority of the students seem to have been impressed by the one-to-one contact afforded them by the teacher counselors in the project.

Suprisingly only 72 (29.5%) students rated the student government activities "excellent". A majority, 119 (48.8%) felt that they were "average", and 46 (18.9%) rated them "poor".

Table 13

FEATURES OF THE PROJECT RATED BY STUDENTS

Items		Frequencies and Percentage by Grade							
		7th		8th		9th		All Students	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
13. Regular small group sessions	Excellent	36	38.7	29	34.9	24	35.3	89	36.5
	Average	48	51.6	50	60.2	39	57.3	137	56.1
	Poor	6	6.5	3	3.6	4	5.9	13	5.3
14. Field Trips	Excellent	38	40.9	42	50.6	17	25.0	97	39.8
	Average	25	26.9	24	28.9	35	51.5	84	34.4
	Poor	28	30.1	15	18.1	14	20.6	57	23.4
15. Films	Excellent	42	45.2	56	67.5	21	30.9	119	48.8
	Average	36	38.7	25	30.1	39	57.4	100	41.0
	Poor	14	15.1	2	2.4	7	10.3	23	9.4
16. Pictures and Slides	Excellent	36	38.7	40	48.2	20	29.4	96	39.3
	Average	40	43.0	39	47.0	37	54.4	116	47.6
	Poor	17	18.3	4	4.8	11	16.2	32	13.1
17. Discussions and interactions	Excellent	38	40.9	30	36.1	20	29.4	88	36.1
	Average	44	47.3	45	54.2	44	64.7	133	54.5
	Poor	10	10.8	4	4.8	5	7.4	19	7.8
18. Teacher - Counselor	Excellent	49	52.7	44	53.0	37	54.4	130	53.3
	Average	37	39.8	32	38.6	23	33.8	92	37.7
	Poor	5	5.4	4	4.8	6	8.8	15	6.1
19. Student Government Activities	Excellent	31	33.3	24	28.9	17	25.0	72	29.5
	Average	35	37.6	46	55.4	38	55.9	119	48.8
	Poor	24	25.8	10	12.1	12	17.6	46	18.6
	N =	93		83		68		244	

Percentages for each item may not total 100% because some students skipped certain items from the questionnaire.

Significance of Different Topics Discussed in the Class:

The students in the Project Inspire program generally liked almost all the topics their teacher counselors introduced to the class. This generally suggests that students were involved in the actual selection of topics and that the teacher counselors exercised considerable expertise in the selection of topics of particular interest to the students at Francis Junior High School.

One hundred and fifty (61.5%) students rated "Drug Problems" as an interesting discussion topic, although 30 (12.3%) students rated it "average" and a large number, 58 (23.8%) thought that it was "not interesting".

One hundred and nineteen (48.8%) students rated "How to study better" as an interesting discussion topic. Eighty (32.8%) students were "not sure" and 40 (16.4%) rated the topic "not interesting". The topic was apparently helpful to a large number of students in developing good study habits.

"Alcoholism" and "crime", studied for several weeks in Project Inspire, got favorable ratings from 126 (51.6%) students and 144 (59.1%) students respectively. The two topics are apparently quite germane to students who live through the agonies of both problems in their own community. Only 58 (23.8%) students and 49 (20.1%) students respectively, thought that these topics were of less interest.

The topic of "values" was met by a mixed student reaction. Ninety-six (39.3%) students rated the topic "interesting"; 97 (39.8%) students were "not sure"; and 44 (18.1%) rated the topic "not interesting".

One hundred and sixty (65.6%) students rated the topic "getting along with people" as "interesting". Sixty (24.4%) students were "not sure" and 19 (7.8%) rated the topic "not interesting". The high student interest in this topic suggests a desire on the part of students to get along better with others. Similar topics should be introduced into Project Inspire in the future.

One hundred and sixty-two (66.4%) students rated the topic, "better living" as "interesting". Fifty-five (22.5%) students were "not sure" and 23 (9.4%) rated the topic "not interesting".

On the whole, the topics covered during the year seem to have been quite timely, useful, and stimulating to the students at Francis Junior High School.

Table 14

STUDENT RATINGS OF TOPICS DISCUSSED IN CLASS

Items		Frequency and Percentage by Grade							
		7th		8th		9th		All Students	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
20. Drug Problems	Interesting	51	54.8	52	62.7	47	69.1	150	61.5
	Not sure	17	18.3	6	7.2	7	10.3	30	12.3
	Not interesting	22	23.7	23	27.7	13	19.1	58	23.8
21. How to study better	Interesting	52	55.9	42	50.6	25	37.8	119	48.8
	Not sure	17	18.3	32	38.6	31	45.6	30	32.8
	Not interesting	22	23.7	7	8.4	11	16.2	40	16.4
22. Alcoholism	Interesting	41	44.1	42	50.6	43	63.2	126	51.6
	Not sure	24	25.8	15	18.1	13	19.1	52	21.3
	Not interesting	25	26.9	23	27.7	10	14.7	58	23.8
23. Crime	Interesting	47	50.5	50	60.2	47	69.1	144	59.1
	Not sure	23	24.7	11	13.3	10	14.7	44	18.1
	Not interesting	19	20.4	20	24.1	10	14.7	49	20.1
24. Values	Interesting	36	38.7	33	39.8	27	39.7	96	39.3
	Not sure	38	40.9	34	41.0	25	36.8	97	39.8
	Not interesting	15	16.1	14	16.9	15	22.1	44	18.1
25. Getting along with people	Interesting	59	63.4	60	72.3	42	61.8	161	66.0
	Not sure	22	23.7	18	21.7	18	26.5	58	23.8
	Not interesting	9	9.7	3	3.6	7	10.3	19	7.8
26. Better living	Interesting	58	62.4	64	77.1	38	55.9	160	65.6
	Not sure	24	25.9	16	19.3	16	23.5	56	23.0
	Not interesting	9	9.7	1	1.2	11	16.2	21	8.6
27. Other (specify)	Interesting	33	35.5	29	34.9	20	29.4	82	33.6
	Not sure	27	29.0	28	33.7	17	25.0	72	29.5
	Not interesting	15	16.1	9	10.8	10	14.7	34	13.9
	Blank	18	19.4	17	20.5	21	30.9	56	22.9
	N =	93		83		68		244	

Percentages for each item may not total 100% because some students skipped certain items from the questionnaire.

When asked about other topics or activities they would like to see introduced into the Project Inspire classes, the students mentioned: future plans, outside world, value of money, dropout problems, watching TV and listening to records, sex, space projects, sports, abortion, hungry children, news analysis, artwork, personality, love, friendship, comparing poems, family living, college, jobs and government.

With a few exceptions most students seemed to have enjoyed being a part of Project Inspire. Many expressed their desire to continue with the Project at the next grade level, even if at another school. Much credit should be given to the project staff for eliciting the overwhelming confidence and support of their students.

Teacher Opinions

Table 15 charts the teacher opinions of Project Inspire. Approximately 3 out of 4 teachers noted improvements in various areas and felt the project should be continued. Improved attitudes and behavior of students (1) and improved communications among students, teachers and staff (5) led the list of noted improvements. Attendance also received high marks ("Very Much Improved" or "Much Improved") from 10 of the 21 teachers, correlating with the findings of reduced tardiness and improved class attendance reported earlier.

In spite of the fact that standardized achievement test scores increased by 1.3 years grade equivalent, only 6 teachers (29.6%) reported that student achievement was "Very Much Improved". However, 6.3%, of the teachers did see some improvement in student achievement.

Teachers emphasized the development of self expression, insight, self-concept, improved attitudes and the emotional climate of the classroom as strengths of Project Inspire. Typical comments included the following:

> "The project, (1) gives the students a chance for greater self expression, and (2) makes them more aware of what they should and <u>need</u> to do to improve and succeed in school."
>
> "Attempts to provide a service for all students within the school. Field trips and other areas of interest to the students are explored."
>
> "Very good staff with ideals that are positive, meaningful, practical, and adaptable to situations at Francis. They are developing desirable attitudes and improving the emotional climate of the classroom."

Table 15

TEACHERS OPINIONS OF PROJECT INSPIRE

Item	RESPONSE											
	Very Much Improved		Much Improved		Improved		No Difference		Not as Good		No opinion or Blank	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1. Attendance	5	23.8	5	23.8	3	14.3	6	28.6	-	-	2	9.6
2. Attitudes and behavior of students	4	19.0	5	23.8	6	28.6	6	28.6	-	--	-	-
3. Student Achievement	1	4.8	5	23.8	7	33.3	7	33.3	1	4.8	-	-
4. Students interest in school	2	9.5	5	23.8	6	28.6	7	33.3	1	4.8	-	-
5. Communication among students, teachers and staff	2	9.5	7	33.3	7	33.3	5	23.8	-	-	-	-
6. Classroom management	1	4.8	7	33.3	6	28.6	7	33.3	-	-	-	-

7. Project Inspire should be:
Continued - 16 or 76.2%; Discontinued - 1 or 4.8%; No opinion - 2 or 9.5%; Blank - 2 or 9.5%.

N = 21

"The project offers an outlet to the students, to voice their opinions which are otherwise kept back in a classroom. In this way, problems in the classrooms are discussed and the students may, through the discussions, gain a better insight into their roles."

"Project Inspire has done much to develop within the involved student a realization that he - as an individual - is very important. Many students have been guided toward developing a more positive concept of themselves. These students were previously "withdrawn" and more or less "out of it". Many of them have begun to achieve academically and socially because of their newly developed outlook about themselves and others around them."

"Project Inspire is a definite asset to Francis. The program gives students a chance to express themselves in an organized fashion. It is a pleasant break from the routine of the classroom. From my observations of other schools, Francis is way at the top. Project Inspire and its staff deserves much credit for such a well organized school."

"Children are given the opportunity to communicate with adults on a more personal level."

"Students are more interested in what h ppens in their school."

"It affords students an added opportunity for self-expression and to relate on a one-to-one basis with an adult regarding his problems in and out of school, etc.

"The strengths of Project Inspire, in my opinion, is the fact that students may come and express their viewpoints, opinions and desires on any subject. These viewpoints, opinions and desires are very necessary and important at this age level, where many adults even parents have no time to listen or understan ."

"Safety valve. Opportunity to talk out problems with student and parent."

"To help the students with their problems."

"(1) Students get a chance to air their feelings, (2) Students get a chance to communicate with an adult in small groups."

Teachers also gave very constructive comments on the weaknesses of Project Inspire and suggestions as to how the project

could be improved. A number of comments were:

" The weakness of this project is the time element. There should be a complete class or two at one time."

"Inspire should not be given during regular class time. This only hampers student's academic progress."

"Inspire should take students on more outside adventures."

"(1) Under staffed, (2) class size too large, (3) Project Inspire should have two class rooms for their use only."

"The staff needs to be informed more often or may be in some unique way of 's happening in Project Inspire - reports, news let ers etc."

"The project could have an end of the year activity to let the entire school know about what it has done for the year. It would also be nice if snapshots could be taken of Project Inspire classroom activities."

"Your late refunding."

"Perhaps field trips as a reward for good behavior, attendance, etc. would serve as an incentive for greater effort to improve all way around."

Other suggestions related to the types of student problems that teachers felt should receive greater attention:

"It should deal with those students who show a definite need for the service P.I. offers. All students do not need the services. They (confident enough to) know the direction they need to follow."

"More motivation for under-achievers and truant, absentee students. Weaknesses - many of the students that fit the above need personal attention and probably psychiatric help. P.I. cannot do this."

"The major weaknesses lie in the fact that too much weight is placed on Project Inspire as a dumpting place for bahavioral problems and not enough, by the faculty, on helping to motivate the student."

"Project Inspire should reach more students. There should be a strong emphasis placed on the under-achieving student who needs that "something extra" to get him started toward success."

"My students complain and say they don't want to go. It is hard to get some of them out of my room and up to Inspire. There should be more communications with teachers and homeroom teachers. I am not sure I know what happens in an Inspire class. There must be a better way to group the students."

"Some students will never place emphasis on subjects in minor area if they have no interest in the class."

"Although all students do not have a positive attitude towards school, relevance is shown in Project Inspire. The relevance of school and staying in school should be stressed even more."

Summary of Findings

The following is a summary of the findings in relation to the objectives established for Project Inspire.

1. To create increased positive feelings toward school.

   -- "Serious school problems" as measured by the Youth Inventory were significantly reduced, declining an average of 3% from 19% in the pre-inventory (December 1974) to 16% in the post-inventory (May 1975). Specific problems showing the most improvement (see Tables 3 and 4) are in the areas of teacher-student relationships, academic work, interest in school and planning for future school work.

   -- A majority (50% or more) of the project sudents realized improved self concepts in relation to schooling by increased interest in school, confidence in ability to do school work, and opportunities to express feelings about school (Student Questionnaire, Table 12).

   -- Two-thirds or more of the teachers reported improved student attitudes and behavior, interest in school and teacher-student communications (Teacher Questionnaire, Table 15).

This objective was achieved. Some serious school problems were diminished and there was a feeling of improved attitudes and communication on the part of students and teachers alike. However, improved instruments are needed to identify more clearly areas of student needs impacted by the project.

2. To obtain increased academic achievement.

-- Standardized test results (Educational Development Series, Battery Composite) show a gain of 13 months for a 12 month period and a 20.5 month gain over an 18 month period for eighth and ninth grade students (see pages 13 and 14).

-- About two-thirds of the teachers report improvement in student achievement (Table 15, question 3). However, only about 40% of the students feel that Project Inspire helped them get better grades; about 36% were not sure, and about 21% did not feel that Project Inspire helped them in getting better grades (Table 12, question 8).

The standardized test results show very dramatic gains in student achievement as measured by a comprehensive achievement battery. The results far exceed the objectives established for the project and indicate a reversal of the trend among inner city students to fall further behind in academic achievement as they progress from grade to grade. The teacher reports of improved academic achievement support the findings of the standardized test results.

A number of reasons may explain why only about 42% of the students felt that Project Inspire helped them to get better grades. First, some teachers may not have given higher grades, even though classroom performance was improved. Second, some students (probably the 36% who were "not sure") felt that factors other than Project Inspire contributed to improvements in their grades. Third, many students (one third or more) continue to have needs for the improvement of skills in areas such as study habits, reading, writing essays, making class presentations and other factors which contribute to improved grades (Table 3, questions 1, 2, 7 and 15, post inventory results; Table 12, questions 9 and 10; Table 14, question 21).

3. To reduce the tardiness rate.

-- The average daily tardiness rate was significantly reduced from 8.0% in the 1973-74 school year, to 3.5% in September -- October 1974, to 1.3% in May -- June 1975.

-- Approximately 60% of the teachers reported an improvement in class attendance.

This objective was achieved with a very dramatic reduction of tardiness rates over a two year period. Project Inspire should try to maintain the current low tardiness rate of about 1% to 2%.

4. To reduce the absenteeism rate.

-- Absenteeism rates increased by 1% during the school year, from 16.9% in September and October 1974 to 17.9% in May and June 1975.

-- Trend analysis from previous years showed no improvement in absenteeism rates. A comparison of data for junior high schools citywide showed that Francis Junior High School was quite typical of other junior high schools in the city.

This objective was not achieved. The failure to distinguish between illegal and excusable absences when measuring absenteeism may have some bearing on the poor results. The Project Director plans to emphasize the reduction of absences during the coming year.

5. To reduce the drop-out rate.

-- The drop-out rate was substantially lower than for the year previous to the project (1972-73). The rate was 7.3% (44 of 603 students) in 1972-73; 4.3% (28 of 651 students) in 1973-74; and only 1.5% (10 of 681 students) in 1974-75.

This objective was achieved. The reduction in the number and percentage of drop-outs was achieved while enrollment was increasing. Project Inspire should strive to maintain this low level of drop-outs.

6. To reduce critical classroom incidents.

-- Critical classroom incidents, reported primarily for behavioral problems such as fighting or disrespect to the teachers, dropped from a daily average of 4.1 in the first advisory of 1973-74 to 0.6 in May - June 1975 (Table 9).

-- The reduction of critical classroom incidents implies a positive increase in the quality of student-teacher relationships, an improvement noted elsewhere in student and teacher responses (see discussion of objective 1.).

This objective was achieved and reflects favorably on the attitudes and behavior of teachers and students alike in managing their relationships to avoid unproductive confrontations.

7. To reduce the use of suspensions.

-- The average daily rate of suspensions declined from 5.1 in September - October 1974 to 3.4 in May - June 1975.

Although there was a decrease in the use of suspensions, this difference was not statistically significant. A larger sampling of suspensions might have achieved statistical signifinance. Suspension is used to remedy undesirable student habits of tardiness, missing class or detention and fighting, tendencies which showed improvement under Project Inspire. The fact that suspensions did not decline at a statistically significant rate is mitigated both by the measured improvements in these other areas as well as by the improved school and classroom atmosphere reported by teachers and students alike.

8. To reduce the use of punitive detentions.

-- Punitive detentions, administered primarily for tardiness to school or to class, decreased from an average of 7.8 in September - October 1974 to 3.2 in May - June 1975.

This objective was achieved. The results are consistent with the findings of reduced tardiness, reduced critical incidents, reduced suspensions, and improved student-teacher relations.

Additional observations are noted in the section that follows.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study fully support the objectives established for the project. With the exception of a reduction in absences, all objectives have been achieved. Achievement gains measured by standardized tests and teacher reports are quite remarkable; the drop-out rate has been dramatically reduced; teacher-student relations are very much improved; and the necessity for taking punitive steps (as indicated by reports of critical classroom incidents, suspensions, and punutive detentions) has been greatly reduced. These positive results were achieved even though the project was funded late in 1974 and the teacher-counselors were new to the project. A great deal of credit for the success of Project Inspire must be given to all staff members, to the principal for administrative support and to the entire teaching staff for its cooperation.

Project Inspire at the ... ncis Junior High School has proved to be a meaningful and timely project. The project successfully elicited the full cooperation and support of the students, teachers and administrators of the school. The project was successful in achieving all but one of its objectives during the last year. The project instilled many students with a better understanding of themselves and a more positive attitude toward school. Early funding, carefully planned programs, and a concentration of services to the neediest students will make the project even more meaningful to the school community.

The recommendations that follow are aimed at making further improvements in the project in certain areas, while consolidating the gains already achieved.

1. Achievement.

   -- Although excellent gains were made, continued attention should be given to the improvement of reading skills and study hibits. Students seem to have been most receptive to classroom discussion topics concerned with the improvement of learning skills. It is, therefore, recommended that small group activities should increasingly focus upon reading and study skills. Through careful teacher-counselor planning this objective can be achieved without jeopardizing the prior objectives of improvement of student interest in school and reduction of critical classroom incidents. The resources of other projects such as ESEA Title I or the Urban Reeducation Program might be effectively integrated into learning

strategies devised by teachers and teacher-counselors. Good learning and reading skills are essential to a reduction of common school problems. The project should direct its resources to achieve an even greater emphasis upon these crucial fundamentals.

2. Absenteeism.

-- A reduction of absences was the one primary objective not achieved by Project Inspire. The rate of absenteeism which increased by 1% during the last two months of the school-year was an unexpected disappointment to staff members. It is recommended, therefore, that more attention be given to this problem. A strategy for addressing this problem should include a new measurement device by which illegal absences are distinguished from excusable absences. More creative methods should be devised to foster good student motivation. The provision of family assistance to those who need it may also help to improve student attendance. This requires the school to maintain an even closer contact with students and parents.

3. Participation in Group Sessions.

-- Although most students showed interest in Project Inspire activities, there were some students and teachers who felt that all students did not need to participate. Regular class attendance, better parental direction and a higher motivational level were cited as reasons that some students may not need to participate. It is, therefore, recommended that provisions should be made for those students with a sufficiently high level of achievement, attendance and behavior to elect not to participate in Project Inspire. This arrangement might reduce the strenuous workload of already overburdened teacher-counselors. Intensified services to those students who most need them should also be considered.

4. Topics and Processes in the Group Sessions.

-- The group sessions introduced many relevant topics into student discussions. Such topics included: "drugs", "alcoholism", "values", "better living", and "how to study". There seems to be several other areas in which students are interested that are quite relevant to their daily life at school and in the community. It is therefore recommended at the beginning of the school year students be given the

opportunity to suggest topics of interest to them and that those areas of maximum interest be considered by the teacher-counselors for introduction into the group sessions.

-- Of the different learning activities conducted in Project Inspire group discussions received comparatively lower student ratings than films and pictures. It is, therefore, recommended that a survey of student opinion be taken at the beginning of the school-year to determine the different activities of most interest to the students. Student interests should be carefully taken into consideration. Positive learning experiences can be devised through the careful use of field trips and outside speakers.

5. Facilities and Resources of the Group Sessions.

-- Francis Junior High School generally has very spacious rooms and excellent instructional facilities. However, some of the rooms chosen for group discussions were somewhat congested and prohibited free student movement, individual activities and micro-sessions. It is, therefore, recommended that each of the teacher-counselors be assigned spacious rooms with necessary furniture and audio-visual equipment for group sessions. In addition to the Project Inspire resource center, a classroom library equipped with resource materials would be ideal for each teacher-counselor, since it more readily available for student use.

6. Intervention Strategies.

-- The project has successfully implemented a number of intervention strategies other than group sessions. These include a crisis center to handle problems referred by teachers, the Student-Government Association, staff training to facilitate the better handling of human relations situations, development of the teacher-counselor role and involvement in the Urban Reeducation Program. These strategies were initiated to help remedy problems of child abuse and neglect as well as to improve the school and classroom climate, student-teacher communications, and student self concepts. The considerable gains achieved by Project Inspire are evidenced by the improved attitudes, communication, and self concepts of students and related reudctions in drop-outs, tardiness, suspensions and punitive detentions. However, many problems persist for a considerable number of students. Increased

parent contact should address behavioral problems and achievement problems as well as deficient self concepts, attendance and attitudes. In order to assist the project staff in this regard the Parent Advisory Council which operated during the 1974-75 academic year should be further expanded. Teacher-counselors and regular teachers should be close enough to students and parents to recognize problems at their inception. Uniform efforts from teachers, administrators and counselors are required to continue improvements in these areas.

7. Communications.

-- Although Francis Junior High School teachers and staff were generally well informed of the activities of Project Inspire, some teachers indicated a need for more up-to-date information. Plans to involve the community in different programs of the project were limited by project resources and priorities. It is, therefore, recommended that an active newsletter and leaflet campaign be initiated to inform the staff of project activities and to involve more members of the community in project related activities.

8. Evaluation Design and Instruments.

-- Although the evaluation design does not include a matched control group, it was not the intention of Project Inspire to conduct a controlled experiment. The process and product dimensions of Project Inspire can, with the involvement of the entire school, be quite suitably measured by comparisons of normative data for standardized tests and questionnaires, comparisons to city-wide data for absences and other measures, and trend analyses comparing results from year to year. The design is suitable to a project geared to making organizational changes in guidance services, staff roles and student roles in order to affect the interrelated problems of student achievement, school and classroom climate, student-teacher communications and improved student behavior. However, a clearer detection of changes in process dimensions of the project requires improved instruments and records. The Youth Inventory provides only a small part of the information needed from students. Some of the questions in the Youth Inventory are not appropriate to students in grades seven through nine, while other questions do not pertain to the goals of Project Inspire. In order to supplement the deficient data obtained from the Youth Inventory and other instruments, this year the evaluators administered specially devised student and teacher questionnaires. It is, therefore, recommended that more

comprehensive instruments for students and teachers be developed. Student instruments should be expanded to include more extensive assessments of self-concepts, school attitudes, student-teacher relations, interpersonal relations, academic needs and planning for the future. Improved measures of student reactions to the various topics and activities of the project are also needed to assess those components most beneficial to students. The teacher questionnaire should be expanded to include assessments of involvement with student problems, areas of student progress and observations of continuing student needs.